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ABSTRACT

The Graduate Research Training Program began in 1966 as a 3-year doctoral level program which recruited about 25 interns from fields other than education. In 1969 it was changed to a 1-year masters-degree program for 10 interns, about half of whom had majored in education. The 1-year program in 1969-70 included formal course work in research, independent research projects on school dropouts conducted cooperatively with the Knoxville School System, seminars on analysis of research reports and computer programing, and a trip to the American Educational Research Association convention. Of the nine students who completed the program, four continued graduate study, and four took positions in the field of education. Although many problems were encountered in the training program, the project director felt that the experience acquired would be valuable in designing future programs. (RT)

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FINAL REPORT

GRADUATE RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM

Grant No. OEG-0-9-061864-4413-(010)

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This report is submitted to review the activities which transpired during the 1969-70 GRTP in the College of Education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. It is divided into three sections beginning with a brief historical setting followed by a description of specific program activities and accomplishments and finally a subjective analysis of the effects of the GRTP on the interns and the sponsoring institution.

Historical Note

The GRTP began in 1966 under the direction of Dr. John Ray. It was intended at that time that the program would be of three years duration and would be oriented to the doctoral level of training, relying heavily upon the concept of involving interns from fields outside of education. The interns were thus selected and appointed.

A great deal of difficulty was experienced in this first year in attempting to achieve this cross-pollination of interests and orientations. The course requirements and research orientation desired by the GRTP were in some cases at cross-purpose with those of the departments and schools from which the interns came.

At the end of the first year, Dr. John Kennedy replaced Dr. Ray as Director of GRTP. Dr. Kennedy brought to the program a very strong experimental and psychological research orientation.

In October of 1968, Dr. Kennedy submitted a proposal for continuation of the GRTP which reflected his experiences and judgements. He recommended a somewhat slower approach to building sound research

orientation within the College of Education. He reduced the number of interns from 25 to 10 but, more importantly, changed the levels from doctoral training to the master's degree level. He also accepted a much larger percentage of students majoring in education. This proposal was accepted by the USOE and implemented in September of 1969. This approach represented the most appropriate means of accomplishing the ultimate goals of the GRTP.

Dr. Kennedy left The University of Tennessee in August of 1969 at which time Dr. Douglas C. Towne assumed the directorship of the GRTP. Having had three years of experience at The University of Tennessee College of Education directing research and developmental activities, Dr. Towne decided that the accepted proposal was indeed the best approach to developing a valid research training program. He proceeded to implement the activities contained within the accepted proposal. These activities are described in the following pages.

In summary, the GRTP experienced many difficulties in its four years of operation. It does seem appropriate, however, to state that the influence exerted by the program was felt in positive ways by the interns and by many faculty members within the College of Education.

GRTP Activities - 1969-70

There were three major types of activities involved in the GRTP program of 1969-70. The first involved the formal course work required of each intern and designed to provide the research content base for further development. The second type of activity was the intern experience in which each student was involved while the third included supplementary activities designed to fill the existing gaps and provide greater

and diverse experiences related to research.

Course Work

The 10 interns were required to complete a core group of research courses during their four quarters of study. (These courses were listed and described in the report submitted November 1, 1969.) Each of the students successfully completed the required courses or their equivalents with one exception. The exception was a woman who experienced a serious illness late in the Spring Quarter. This illness, along with financial difficulties, prevented the intern from completing the program.

Of the nine students who successfully completed the program, eight have now moved into further graduate work or employment within the educational field. Four of the interns have completed their master's work successfully and are now working toward their doctorates, each involved in programs with a heavy emphasis on research. Three of the interns are now teaching in the public school system with one of them having duties related to educational development. One intern is working as a guidance counselor in a federally supported program in a rural school setting. Another intern is a curriculum specialist within an exemplary project for career education funded with monies from the Division of Vocational and Technical Education, USOE. Another student is now married and is devoting her time to the tasks of being a housewife. Of the 10 interns, then, four are continuing graduate study, four are employed within the field of education, one is now a housewife, and one found it necessary to curtail professional activities due to health and financial reasons.

All of the students expressed the judgement that the course work was helpful, but rather academic and lacking in direction for application. These feelings were offset, however, by their experiences in

intern projects and supplementary activities.

Intern Projects

There were three major internship projects in which the interns participated. Each of the projects was conducted as team research and attempts were made to compose the teams of persons with varying backgrounds and competencies. Two of the projects were conducted within the Knoxville School System and dealt with the school dropout problem. The third project was a research study of the perceptions of faculty and students within the College of Education toward communications.

Dropout Study I. A team of four interns was assigned the task of analyzing the dropout information system presently used by the Knoxville School System. This analysis included a description of the ways and means such information was generated, processed, and used. It followed such information from the point of origin at the local school through the central office to the state office. In addition to analyzing the process, the study also included an assessment of the data within three high schools (one ghetto school serving primarily the black population, one school in an affluent area serving primarily larger middle and upper class whites, and a third school in a somewhat integrated area serving lower to middle class whites and blacks).

The major impact of this experience upon the GRTP interns was the realization that data systems are not the most valid and reliable and that the use of such information is generally minimal. A related accomplishment of the activity was the establishment of closer relationships between the College of Education and the research division of the Knoxville School System. The cooperative relationships developed were most

rewarding and profitable to both agencies and should prove mutually beneficial in the future.

Dropout Study II. The second dropout study involved the administration of a Semantic Differential to students reaching the dropout age in the same three schools. The instrument was designed to assess student perceptions toward school and nonschool concepts and toward personal and nonpersonal concepts. Part of the data obtained from this study was used by one intern as her thesis.

The data generated by this study were analyzed visually on the three dimensions of evaluative, activity, and potency. The visual analysis incorporated the "sociogram" approach of identifying isolates and clusters of concepts and subjects.

Communications Study. The third intern experience also centered upon the Semantic Differential. The Semantic Differential again included the three dimensions of evaluative, activity, and potency and was administered to 436 subjects including undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff within the College of Education. The concepts used were 11 general concepts and 45 specific concepts. The specific concepts contained three each relating to research instruction and service, with the remaining 36 relevant to internal or external communications and personnel, message, or channel.

The results were again displayed and analyzed visually within Osgood's three-dimensional semantic space. The most obvious finding of this study was that neither students nor faculty and staff were very emotional about the subject of communications.

Supplementary Activities.

Recognizing the gaps between the formal course work and actual research activities in education, it was deemed necessary to provide supplementary activities. Many such activities were conducted informally on a one-to-one basis between the director and interns, but only group activities will be described herein.

Seminar. The first quarter was devoted to a formal seminar which met weekly and was oriented to give a quick exposure to major research concepts and philosophy. Beginning with general discussions of basic research aspects the seminar accomplished quickly the necessary orientation which allowed critical analysis of research studies and research course work. The seminar extended into the Winter Quarter where the orientation was the analysis of actual research studies as reported in educational research journals.

It was not difficult to find research reports with blatant shortcomings and before the end of the second quarter seminar all interns had switched from unquestioning acceptance of any published "research" report to a hypercritical approach which should prove useful in their future lives. It is the opinion of this writer that such a reorientation was the major accomplishment of the GRTP experience.

Evening Seminars. During the end of Fall Quarter and into Winter Quarter, various evening seminars were held in the home of the GRTP Director. These events involved an invited expert who presented his views toward research and development. The sessions were very informal and found a much greater give and take than would be possible in the classroom environment.

AERA Convention. Nine of the 10 interns attended the 1970 AERA Convention held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This event was most profitable and perhaps the major result was realization on the part of the interns that researchers are human and that the aura of infallibility with which the students viewed researchers was sometimes inappropriate. As a result of the critiques which were a part of the seminars, the students were quite capable of sifting the "wheat from the chaff".

Computer Programming. The Spring Quarter involved five of the interns in a tutorial course in utilization of the computer. Basics of program writing were presented and actual experience in program construction and use were provided. As an experimental activity it was somewhat successful but possible improvements were made obvious. It is anticipated that the knowledge gained will be utilized by the computing center to provide new and more relevant approaches to utilization of computer services by graduate students.

Tutorial Sessions. Switching from the group seminars conducted during the fall and winter quarters the director initiated tutorial meetings between himself and each intern. These sessions proved most beneficial to many of the interns but less profitable to others. The experience indicated that there was promise in this approach but that further refinements would be necessary.

Summer Quarter. The summer quarter of 1970 was largely devoted to completing the internship projects and other related activities. The director assisted some students in finding employment or in obtaining acceptance in graduate study.

Analysis of Effects

It is the opinion of this writer that the GRTP did indeed accomplish significant effects both upon the students involved and the institution sponsoring the program. During the four years of the program many problems were encountered and partially resolved.

The approach of taking a longer range view to developing a greater research orientation within the College of Education through development of both the master's and doctoral level of graduate study should be continued. It seems appropriate that more time and broader approaches may be necessary in establishing the more sophisticated research orientation.

With more effective communications between the College of Education and the USOE it seems entirely feasible to accomplish major changes which will not only accomplish the general goals of the Graduate Research Training Program but will also have a desirous effect upon a most promising area of expansion within the College of Education.

It is strongly recommended by this writer that the GRTP of the USOE reassess its position regarding further funding of research training activities at the University of Tennessee and accept the challenge which exists, not only of bringing about quality training of researchers, but also of achieving major impact on practice improvement within the public schools of Tennessee. Both potentials now exist and the experience and effects resulting from the four years of GRTP activities will prove most helpful and beneficial. It still remains, however, that in order for such a program to be relevant to this situation it will be necessary that it be somewhat different in its approach and procedures.